

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHORAL MUSIC OF HERBERT
HOWELLS AS FOUND IN THE ANGLICAN CANTICLE SETTINGS
MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS FOR
SAINT PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

by
Benjamin T. Keller

A Document Submitted to the Faculty of the
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

I hereby recommend that this document prepared under
my direction by Benjamin T. Keller entitled

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be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

Maurice H. Skones

Signature of Major Professor

Date

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January 15, 1987

Date

DEDICATION

To Dr. Maurice H. Skones,
"The Master"
for his patience, guidance, and support
during my entire musical career.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study provides an historical perspective on the choral music of Herbert Howells using the Anglican canticle settings. The study also offers insights into stylistic traits, liturgical function, and the relationship between the canticle settings and the specific buildings for which they were intended, as exemplified in Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral.

This study gives an overview of Howells' other choral music, formative influences on his compositional style and techniques, and presents insights into the man himself in a biographical sketch. Musical examples are quoted to support specific points made. The study is limited in scope to the choral music of Howells, although parallel references can be made in a study of the instrumental works.

Three sources have been helpful in the research for the study. The Music of Herbert Howells,¹ a doctoral dissertation by Hodgson, surveys all of Howells' compositional areas, both vocal and instrumental.

1. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970.

While such a study was long overdue and is admirable, it surveys the canticle settings only in an overview which is hardly due treatment for a major portion of the composer's output.

Additional valuable data were obtained from Palmer's Herbert Howells--A Study,² a companion to the Howells works in the Novello catalog. While benefiting from the passage of eight additional years, this publication is brief and again in "overview" style. While touching on every facet of Howells' endeavor, the book lacks a bibliography or index, however an interesting interview serves as an "autobiographical note."

The third source deserving special mention is The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary by Shepherd.³ Providing detailed information and historical background on all facets of Anglican worship, this source contains the entire Book of Common Prayer.

Numerous periodical articles have been written about Howells and his music since 1910. These have provided the author with valuable data regarding historical perspectives

2. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978.

3. Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr. The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1950.

and stylistic elements. Notable are "Herbert Howells and the English Revival"⁴ by Ottaway and "Herbert Howells, an Analysis of a Lasting Commitment to Music for Church and Cathedral"⁵ by Rusciano.

4. D. Hugh Ottaway. "Herbert Howells and the English Revival." The Musical Times, 108, No. 1496 (October, 1967), pp. 897-99.

5. C. D. Rusciano. "Herbert Howells, An Analysis of a Lasting Commitment to Music for Church and Cathedral." Sacred Music, 108, No. 1 (1981), pp. 11-16.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY

Herbert Norman Howells was born on October 17, 1892, in the small town of Lydney in the pastoral West English countryside. Along the River Severn is the nearby city of Gloucester with its Cathedral Church of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, magnificent in Norman-Gothic design, with a musical history rich in liturgical traditions. The Three Choirs Festival, associated with the cathedral, is one of the oldest and most prestigious in all of Europe.¹

The Forest of Dean is a short distance from Lydney, and to the east are the hills of Cotswold. It was in this beautiful setting that Howells was born and raised and received his initial musical training and exposure. His childhood was evidently congenial; music was an essential aspect of his experience.

Music was always so much a part of himself that he cannot be said to have begun it at any particular date, and his early years were a kaleidoscope of piano, organ, composition, football, books, school

1. The Three Choirs Festival is an annual event of six days' duration, substantially but not exclusively choral in nature, based in turn of rotation at the cathedrals of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford. The Festival has origins dating to 1715.

work, natural beauty, and again music as the medium through which everything was viewed.²

In 1905, Howells began his formal training as an articled pupil to Sir Herbert Brewer, organist and choirmaster at Gloucester Cathedral.³ The influence of Gloucester, in terms of traditions, music, and people, was intense in its impact on the style of Howells the composer. The most crucial event during his time as a pupil at Gloucester, however, was his introduction to Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) and his music in 1910. The occasion was the first performance at the Three Choirs Festival of Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. This meeting is described in Chapter 3.

In 1911, Howells resigned his apprenticeship to Brewer in favor of London, devoting himself entirely to composition. Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), fellow student at Gloucester, preceded him by one year and influenced his decision heavily. Winning the Open Scholarship in Composition, Howells entered the Royal College of Music in

2. "A Young Composer of Promise." The Christian Science Monitor, June 14, 1919, p. 22.

3. The articled pupil at Gloucester Cathedral received weekly piano and organ lessons with supervised theory and harmony paperwork. After three years of study, the pupil remained at the cathedral as assistant organist until a full-time appointment was secured. The practice is now discontinued.

1912 and remained as a student until 1917. His studies at the Royal College of Music were under such men as the Director, Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918), Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), Charles Wood (1866-1926), Sir Walter Parratt (1841-1924), and Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941).

All were leaders in late nineteenth-century English music, but the influence of Stanford and Parry rise above the others, especially considering Howells' emergence as an eminent composer of music for the Anglican Church. The first liturgical piece written by Howells came early in his association with Stanford. Premiered at Westminster Cathedral in 1912 under the direction of Sir Richard R. Terry, the Mass in the Dorian Mode already exhibited traits that would identify Howells' style at a later date, most notably the use of modality. Stanford also was instrumental in having Howells' Piano Quartet in A minor, op. 21, published in 1916 under the auspices of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (the first such piece to be published and one

of only seven selected from one hundred and thirty submitted that year).⁴ Howells said of the event, "It was due to this happy stroke of fortune that I became known."⁵

Howells remarked to Benoliel that Parry was definitely the greatest man he had ever known.⁶ Howells came under the spell of Parry while studying at the Royal College of Music and responded to both his musical genius and unique human qualities. The structures which Parry used in his cantatas had considerable influence on Howells' musical thought.

The immediate post-college years were troubled by illness which forced him to give up a post as sub-organist of Salisbury Cathedral. Compositional activity continued unabated, however, and the choral fruits of this period include the Three Carol-Anthems. In 1920, two significant events occurred in the life of Howells: first, his marriage to Dorothy Dawe, and second, his appointment as a Teacher of Composition at his alma mater, the Royal College of Music.

4. Originally established in 1913 to finance the installation of organs in over 3800 churches and chapels in Britain, the trust is active today in assisting teacher training programs as well as in promoting the music of contemporary British composers. Among other works selected in 1916 were A London Symphony by Vaughan Williams, an opera by Stanford, and Frank Bridge's The Sea, a symphonic suite.

5. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 13.

6. Bernard Benoliel. "Herbert Howells (1892-1983)." Tempo, 145 (June, 1983), p. 11.

Howells was to continue in this position for the next sixty-three years until his death in 1983.

Concurrently with this position he held appointments at Morley College, London (1925-28), Saint Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith (1936-62)⁷, and the King Edward Professorship of Music at London University (1954-64), where he subsequently received the title of Professor Emeritus, having been succeeded by Thurston Dart.

As a teacher and adjudicator, Howells was of the first rank. Steadfast in his desire for technical excellence, Howells was sensitive to the creative aspects of composition that were invaluable to the student. He inspired great loyalty and affection, realizing that composition could only be taught to a limited extent, and never stifled originality in whatever form it manifested itself.⁸ Sir David Willcocks, in an address given at the Service of Thanksgiving for Herbert Howells in Westminster Abbey in June, 1983, recalled his first festival adjudication engagement, in which

. . .after one quite good choir had performed, I had scribbled in pencil 'pleasant tone.' I peeped over my shoulder to see, written in ink, 'voices of dewy

7. Howells succeeded Gustav Holst, who held the position from 1906-1934, and Ralph Vaughan Williams' temporary appointment from 1934-1936.

8. Marjorie Howe. "Content to Remember," Part II. The Royal College of Music Magazine, 78, No. 1 (1982), p. 132.

freshness.' He found one poetic phrase after another to describe the work of successive competitors, never repeating himself.⁹

The years after his appointment to the faculty of the Royal College of Music were marked by a smaller compositional output but an increase in travel abroad as adjudication trips were made to Canada, the United States, and South Africa in 1921-1923. Acquaintances made with Edward Elgar (1857-1934), Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), and Frederick Delius (1862-1934) were also significant.

In 1935, the composer's son, Michael Kendrick Howells, was stricken with spinal meningitis and died at age nine. This tragedy is described by Howells as "essentially profound, and in its very nature, beyond argument."¹⁰ Hodgson described this event as a turning point in Howells' career, leading to the composition of the masterpiece Hymnus Paradisi and the subsequent trend toward setting liturgical and non-liturgical sacred texts, nearly excluding purely instrumental and secular vocal works.¹¹

In 1937, Howells received the degree Doctor of Music from Oxford University. The war years found Howells serving

9. Sir David Willcocks. "Herbert Howells," The Royal College of Music Magazine, 79, No. 3 (1983), p. 106.

10. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 46.

11. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970, p. 37.

as Deputy Organist at Saint John's College, Cambridge. As the war was ending, in 1945-46, Howells composed the Anglican canticle settings for King's College, Cambridge, collectively known as Collegium Regale, which ushered in the mature style in Howells' religious choral music. During this time the composer continued to teach and to compose prolifically for the church. Honors were to be bestowed. In 1953, he was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II. In 1959, he was elected the third John Collard Life Fellow, after Elgar and Vaughan Williams. In 1961, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Cambridge University.

Howells' later years were marked by a slowdown in teaching activity (by 1977 only a day and a half at the Royal College of Music rather than five days a week), but with no slowdown in the number of commissions or creative ideas. He had a matter-of-fact attitude toward his advanced years and their natural result, death. He mixed discussion of what he would be doing if given another five years with expressions of simple desire to be buried alongside his wife and son in Gloucestershire. Discussion of such topics held no terror for a man who set the Nunc Dimittis more times than any other composer.

The year of 1983 was one of great loss for English music with the passing of three giants; the conductor Sir Adrian Boult, and the composers Sir William Walton and

Herbert Howells. Howells died on February 23, 1983, in London. A simple burial was impossible for one of England's greatest twentieth-century composers of church music. His final resting place was to be in Westminster Abbey, near Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edward Elgar, Charles Villiers Stanford, and Henry Purcell.

CHAPTER 3

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

The principal beneficiaries of Howells' compositional endeavors have been the church and the great body of English choral tradition. More than any other twentieth-century English composer, Howells demonstrated that composing for the church was a "principal vocation and not merely an act of supererogation."¹ However, a diversity of type and genre is present in the catalog of his compositions, much of the non-religious music having been performed and published.

In church music, Howells stands centrally, and yet is quite unclassifiable. His idiom is immediately recognizable from any few measures of his music, yet it is not static and resists "pigeonholing." A strong sense of romanticism pervades his music. Howells was a composer for

1. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970, p. 36.

whom beauty of sound is music's first requirement, thus he was the reverse of avant-garde,² because avant-garde does not see beauty as something contrived by the composer, but as a by-product of ideas becoming action. "For the avant-garde composer, the deliberate contrivance of beauty is an assumption that a composer is forbidden to take on himself."³ Howells' music is never anything but beautiful in a conservatively tonal sense. Being a pupil of Stanford, he never had anything but admiration for modern conservatives such as his immediate contemporaries, many of whom also studied with Stanford--Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), Arthur Bliss (1891-1975), Arthur Benjamin (1893-1960), Arnold Bax (1883- 1953), Eugene Goossens (1893-1962), Peter Warlock (1894- 1930), and E. J. Moeran (1894-1950). These composers have been shrouded in a cloud of critical obscurity that only now is beginning to clear with the slow passage of time. Due to his compositions for the church, Howells has suffered from this critical complacency to a lesser degree.

Howells was the last of the representatives of the English Revival, those late Romantics whose composition

2. The term "avant-garde" is used by the author conceptually, referring not only to the period of musical experimentation from 1935-1975 that Cope has labelled "avant-garde" but also to the years since which he called "post avant-garde." (David Cope. New Directions in Music, fourth edition. Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown, 1984, pp. 336-37.)

3. Erik Routley. Twentieth-Century Church Music. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1964, p. 55.

was triggered by collection of folk songs of the English countryside and by renewed interest in the music of the Tudor period. This movement was founded by such men as Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) and Gustav Holst (1874-1934). That these men had influence on Howells and his contemporaries is undeniable.

Those composers who managed to extricate themselves from the "pastoral" part of the English Revival, especially early in their careers, have enjoyed greater critical acclaim since they stand less in the shadow of the giants Vaughan Williams and Holst. This group includes Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), Sir William Walton (1902-1983), Michael Tippett (b. 1905), and to a lesser degree Gerald Finzi (1901-1956), and John Ireland (1909-1962). These men are not without influence from the Vaughan Williams-Holst-Howells strain of English Revivalism. Britten had made daily stops at Howells' studio at the Royal College of Music from the age of seventeen, and they continued to be friends until the end of Britten's life. In an interview with Regan, Howells states of Britten that he

. . .is probably the most original composer alive today [in 1971] because he has not rejected what he has inherited but has given it new facets, represented the things we love and know. . .Britten has stamped his heritage with his own individuality.⁴

4. Susan Regan. "Herbert Howells and His Hymnus Paradisi." The Gramophone, 48 (March, 1971), p. 1446.

It is no small coincidence that many of the more well-known works by this group of composers are orchestral, or large-scale vocal works for the stage, and not, as with Howells, primarily music for the church.

Not a collector of folk song as was Vaughan Williams, Howells was interested in folk music primarily for its modal coloring rather than for its human associations. Palmer stated that "Howells had an unconscious response to the human and topographical connotation of folk song, leading to a deep musical expression of that love of nature he felt so keenly."⁵ Chapter 4 deals with the influence of English folk song in more detail.

The influence of the great masters of the Tudor period added to the heritage shared by Vaughan Williams and Howells. In 1910 Vaughan Williams brought a new work to the Three Choirs Festival to be performed at the beginning of a concert featuring Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius. Howells described the occasion in an interview with Palmer:

The Gerontius audience was kept impatiently waiting for twenty minutes while the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis was performed for the first time. At the end of it, this giant of a man--the composer--left the rostrum and, much to my gratification, but

5. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 11.

also embarrassment, came and sat next to me. We followed the score of Gerontius together. . . afterwards, Ivor Gurney and I were quite unable to sleep and spent the night pacing the streets of Gloucester.

Howells called this hearing of Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis as the one experience which stands out as a vitally determining factor in his life:

It was after then that I felt I really knew myself, both as man and artist. It all seemed so incredibly new at the time, but I realized how very, very old it actually was, how I'd been living that music since long before I could ever begin to remember. . . . All through my life I've had this strange feeling that I belonged somehow to the Tudor period--not only musically but in every way. Ralph Vaughan Williams even had a theory that I was the reincarnation of some lesser Tudor luminary.

In its use of modes, its employment of a religious tune in a polyphonic style reminiscent of the sixteenth century, and in its antiphonal massing of forces, the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis became a landmark influence on English composers.

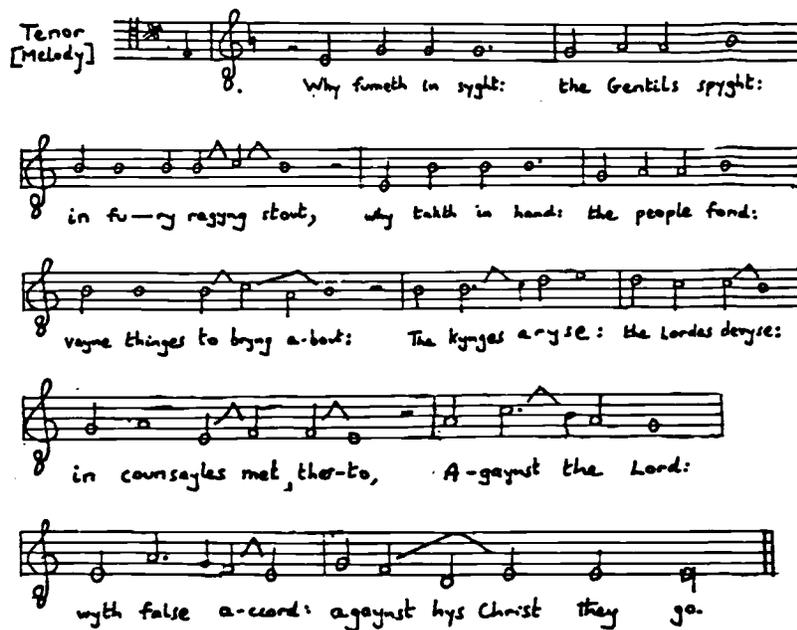
The tune Vaughan Williams chose for Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis is a metrical psalm tune in the Phrygian mode, written by Tallis for Matthew Parker's Psalter (ca. 1560). Figure 1 shows this melody, appearing in the tenor part, with the characteristically Phrygian half steps above the tonic and dominant marked with the symbol \wedge .

6. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 11.

7. Ibid, pp. 11, 17.

Psalm 2. The third Tune.

Tenor [Melody]



Why fumeth in syght: the Gentils spyght:
 in fu—ry raging stout, why takth in hand: the people fond:
 vayne things to bring a-bout: The kynge arysse: the Lordes deryse:
 in counsailes met, ther-to, A-gaynst the Lord:
 with false a-ccord: agaynst hys Christ they go.

Talys.

Figure 1. Thomas Tallis. Third Mode Melody, tenor part.

Constructed in A-B-A form, the outer sections of the Fantasia are Phrygian in character, but in the central section, Vaughan Williams shifts to the Dorian mode transposed to E, which retains the minor third and seventh of the Phrygian, but sounds the major second above the tonic and dominant, rather than the Phrygian minor. Figures 2 and 3 contrast the Phrygian mode with the Dorian transposed to E as used in the Fantasia.



Figure 2. The Phrygian Mode.



Figure 3. The Dorian Mode Transposed to E.

Although obviously not closely modeled on the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis, Howells' Sing Lullaby, from the set of Three Carol-Anthems dating from 1918, contains the Phrygian-Dorian relationship found in the Fantasia, but in reverse, and transposed to F. Figure 4 shows usage of the Dorian mode in the outer sections, the piece being in A-B-A form as in the Fantasia.

Figure 4. Herbert Howells. Sing Lullaby, measures 1-3. London: Stainer and Bell, 1919.

Figure 5 demonstrates the Phrygian characteristics of the B section, with the half-steps marked by the symbol \wedge .

un poco più mosso
mp

Sing lul - la - by to Je - sus

Sing lul - la - by to Je - sus

Sing lul - la - by to Je - sus

Sing lul - la - by to Je - sus

Sing lul - la - by to Je - sus

Figure 5. Herbert Howells. Sing Lullaby, measures 22-25. London: Stainer and Bell, 1919.

Pike suggested that just as Vaughan Williams could isolate the vital features of Tallis' tune and recreate them in a work of his own, so could Howells draw on structural features of the Fantasia--perhaps subconsciously⁸--especially considering the profound influence of that work on Howells' life and compositional endeavors.

The English revival of Tudor music also left its impact on composers of the early twentieth-century in England in terms of linear thinking. Vaughan Williams' Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Refuge closes with a fugal section and listeners to his Mass in G minor could argue that the work was a misplaced Tudor Mass with some strange harmonic quirks.

Howells' use of polyphony is even more pervasive and central to his stylistic thinking. Nearly every canticle

8. Lionel Pike. "Tallis-Vaughan Williams-Howells: Reflections on Model Three." Tempo, 149 (June, 1984), pp. 2-13.

setting contains large imitative sections within the vocal parts, the organ accompaniments serving as the "glue" harmonically but remaining contrapuntally independent. Orchestral and vocal lines are interwoven together throughout the masterpiece Hymnus Paradisi.

Howes called this use of counterpoint "Impressionistic polyphony,"⁹ although neither Vaughan Williams nor Howells would acknowledge any debt to the French Impressionists beyond the influence of Ravel's orchestration. The use of nineteenth-century and older forms by both Englishmen separated them from Debussy and Ravel, the latter rejecting preexisting genre as a basic tenet of style and philosophy. Parallels are apparent in the use of modality and pentatonic scales which pervaded the melodic and harmonic thinking of both English Revivalist and French Impressionist composers, but arose from different roots for different reasons.

A firm and lasting friendship developed between Howells and Vaughan Williams. Howells maintained quiet but firm approval for all that Vaughan Williams represented--uncompromising honesty, blunt expression of what he considered "musical truth" regardless of the consequences, interest in native sources as a springboard for creative expression, and especially in terms of church music,

9. Frank Howes. Liner Notes for the recording Hymnus Paradisi. EMI His Master's Voice ASD 2600, 1970.

aesthetic mood and spiritual climate as a reason for the composition of a particular work. Howells was to identify himself strongly in time with these ideals, but in his own stylistic procedures.

The friendship between Vaughan Williams and Howells led to the former dedicating his cantata Hodie to the latter, stating in the dedication that he had "cribbed" a phrase from Hymnus Paradisi and had decided to keep it. Years later neither composer could find the passage in question. Vaughan Williams' admiration for Hymnus Paradisi was not without some reservation; in a letter to Kennedy he stated "I too am sorry that the Howells work is so difficult. I rather think the double-chorus is quite unnecessary."¹⁰ Nevertheless, the two were steadfast in their friendship and musical affinity.

A discussion of the formative influences on Howells' compositions must include further excursion into the man himself and the concept of loss and grief as a motivating force. A gentle, quiet, introspective man who was neat and methodical, Howells' sensitivities were profound. Two major events cultivated the elegiac undercurrents so

10. Michael Kennedy. The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 383.

poignantly present in all of Howells' music--World War I and Howells' loss of his son.

Palmer stated that with the 1914-1918 war, a way of life and an attitude of mind disappeared from the face of the earth, and with it the best of a rising generation.¹¹ With the onslaught of World War II, elegiac reaction to yet another more terrible horror became prevalent in the music of many British composers, culminating in Britten's masterpiece War Requiem (1962). Only within the last twenty years has a new generation of British composers turned to exploratory techniques long in favor with composers on the European continent. Howells' music appeared to be a Romantic idealization of the past and an alienation of the musical present.

The death of his son Michael deepened Howells' sense of melancholy, and was to affect him profoundly for the rest of his life. Webber stated that Howells' eyes still clouded over with grief at the mention of his son forty-two years later.¹² This expression of loss can perhaps be seen and heard in use of added-note chords-- sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths. The Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral is exquisite in its use of gentle

11. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 38.

12. Nicholas Webber. "Herbert Howells at 85." Music and Musicians, 26 (October, 1977), p. 24.

dissonances to create a profound poignancy suggesting death transformed into life, anguish into ecstasy in a personal, inner sense, which is the essential meaning of the text. This elegiac strain in Howells' music found its way into the music of his students. In Flanders Fields by Derek Healey (b. 1930) for mixed chorus and recorder is an example.

Parallels and influences can also be noted in the music of Frederick Delius (1862-1934). Howells disregarded Delius' cynicism and bitterness, especially toward things English, but he admired Delius for his flow and continuity which he managed to achieve through blocks of sound rather than polyphonic lines. Howells also admired the elegiac in Delius, citing Sea Drift as one of the great expressions of loss,¹³ in which the ecstatic and the elegiac were inextricably bound. A measure of this unity can be found in the harmonic texture of the Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral. Ottaway stated that "While Delius' vision was 'nevermore,' and Howells' was 'evermore,' the music of both has a similar yearning character. There is no mistaking a sunset, whichever way you happen to be facing."¹⁴

13. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970, p. 38.

14. D. Hugh Ottaway. "Herbert Howells and the English Revival." The Musical Times, 108, No. 1496 (October, 1967), p. 899.

CHAPTER 4

THE ENGLISH SIGNATURE

Howells' usage of modes and the pentatonic scale was strongly influenced by the revival of English folk songs and carols. Certain intervallic "signatures" therefore found their way into the melodic style of Howells and other composers who were part of the English Revival or who were influenced by it. In the Herefordshire carol The Truth From Above, collected by Vaughan Williams from Mr. W. Jenkins in 1912, intervallic content of the Phrygian melody consists entirely of minor thirds, perfect fourths, and step-wise motion. This melody typifies the modality of English folk song that became such a strong component of this unique nationalistic compositional style.

SOPRANO
ALTO

1. This is the truth— sent from a - bove.— The
2. The first thing which— I do re - late.—

TENOR
BASS

truth of God,— the God of love,— There-fore don't turn— me—
Is that God— did man cre - ate;— The— next thing which to—

from your door, But— heark-en all— both— rich— and poor.
you I'll tell— Wo - man was made— with— man— to— dwell.

Figure 6. Ralph Vaughan Williams (arr.) The Truth From Above. The Oxford Book of Carols. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 153.

This melody was incorporated by Vaughan Williams into his Fantasia on Christmas Carols.

As shown in Figure 7, Holst's style is deliberately archaic in his setting of the sixteenth-century carol Lullay My Liking.

REFRAIN
Allegretto

p

SOPRANO
ALTO

Lul - lay my lik - ing, my dear son, my sweet - ing:

TENOR
BASS

p

p *pp*

Lul - lay my dear heart, mine own dear dar - ling!

p *pp*

SOLO

p

1. I saw a fair maid - en Sit - ten and sing: She

lul - led a lit - tle child, A swee - te lord - ing:

Figure 7. Gustav Holst. Lullay My Liking, Measures 1-13. The Oxford Book of Carols. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 386.

The opening minor thirds are followed by step-wise motion, the pattern occurring throughout the refrain. In contrast to Vaughan William's Phrygian mode melody in The Truth From Above, Holst's solo verse employs the raised second scale degree (F \sharp), making the tonality E minor. The major third in measures 7-8, although not characteristic of the English Signature, does not affect the second phrase, which contains a perfect example--step-wise motion (both whole and

A

frisoluto

Let all the

ff *mf*

world in every corner sing,

Pon *

B *ff*

My God and King.

Figure 9. Ralph Vaughan Williams. Antiphon from Five Mystical Songs, measures 11-25. London: Stainer and Bell, 1911.

The

mf legato

dim. *p*

G

heavens are not too high, His praise

may thith - er fly:

pp

Figure 10. Ralph Vaughan Williams. Antiphon from Five Mystical Songs, measures 26-37. London: Stainer and Bell, 1911.

Figure 8 shows Vaughan Williams' use of the Dorian mode in the Mass in G minor (1922). This melody exemplifies the English Signature, as do the first two melodic phrases of Antiphon, the last of the Five Mystical Songs, which were written in 1911, one year after Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. As depicted in Figure 9, Vaughan Williams created D major tonality in the harmonic structure but perfect fifths and major thirds are totally absent in the melody; at letter B the sudden cross-relations and G major-F major-A minor chords reinforce the minor third leap before D major returns two measures later. Figure 10 shows the second melodic phrase of Antiphon, the tonality changing to F# minor until measure 33 with the parallel B major-C# major-D major chords painting the word "praise." In spite of the shift in tonality from major to minor, the English Signature remains constant in both melodic phrases.

Howells' use of the Signature helps place him squarely in the mainstream of the English Revival. The first seven measures of Sing Lullaby contain step-wise motion only in the soprano and alto parts and minor thirds added in the tenor part, but the perfect fourth appears only in the bass signature melody which provides interest while moving in contrary motion to the other three parts. Together, all four voices provide a kind of "composite" English Signature resulting from usage of the Dorian mode. Figure 12 portrays the thematic statement in the Gloria

Patri of Howells' Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, an English Signature melody within the context of G minor tonality.

Non troppo lento, e sempre tranquillo.

pp

SOPRANO.
Sing lul - - la - by, Sing lul -

CONTRALTO.
Sing lul - - la - by, Sing lul -

TENOR.
Sing lul - - la - by, Sing lul -

BASS.
mf
Sing lul - la-by, -

- la-by, - lul - la - by, - While snow - doth

- la-by, - lul - la - by, - While snow - doth

- la-by, - lul - la - by, - While snow - doth

- Sing lul - la-by, - While snow - doth

Figure 11. Herbert Howells. Sing Lullaby, measures 1-7. London: Stainer and Bell, 1920.

ancora poco meno mosso *f>*

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso *f>*

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso *f>*

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso *f>*

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso *fgt*

and — to — the Son: —

Figure 12. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 107-115. London: Novello, 1954.

As shown in Figures 13 and 14, Mater Ora Filium, written by Bax in 1921, uses the signature first in a choral context in the opening six measures, then later in a passage for tenor alone.

Lento moderato.

pp

Soprano. Ma-ter o . ra fi - li - um — Ut post hoc . ex .

Alto. Ma-ter o . ra fi - li - um — Ut post hoc . ex .

TUTTI.

Tenor. Ma-ter o . ra fi - li - um — Ut post — hoc . ex .

Bass. Ma-ter o . ra fi - li - um — Ut post hoc . ex .

Sop. *più f* . i . . li - um No . . bis do - net gau - di - um —

Alto. *più f* . i . . li - um No . . bis do . . net gau - di - um —

Ten. *più f* . i . . li - um No . bis do - net gau - di - um —

Bass. *più f* . i - li . - um No . . bis do - net gau - di - um —

Figure 13. Arnold Bax. Mater Ora Filium, measures 1-6. London: Chappell, 1921.

SEMI CHORUS I.

TENOR.
p (parlando)

Fair Mai-den, - Who is this bairn That thou

bear-est in thine arm. _____ ?

Figure 14. Arnold Bax. Mater Ora Filium, measures 10-14. London: Chappell, 1921.

Whether within a Dorian, Phrygian, Pentatonic, or diatonic major-minor context, the similar intervallic content provides a strong common melodic statement, with roots in the modality of English folk songs and carols.

The English Signature also appeared in works of composers not directly associated with the English Revival but influenced by it. In Figure 15, the perfect fifth in measures 7-8 and the major third in measure 11 lend Britten's individuality to the style in the unison opening of Festival Te Deum.

Andante con moto (♩ = 144)
(quasi senza misura) sempre p e comodo

TREBLES
We praise Thee, O God..... we as-

ALTOS
We praise Thee, O God..... we as-

TENORS
We praise Thee, O God..... we as-

BASSES
We praise Thee, O God..... we as-

- knowledge Thee to be the Lord..... All the earth doth wor-ship

- knowledge Thee to be the Lord..... All the earth doth wor-ship

- knowledge Thee to be the Lord..... All the earth doth wor-ship

- knowledge Thee to be the Lord..... All the earth doth wor-ship

Thee, the Fa-ther ev-er - last-ing.

Figure 15. Benjamin Britten. *Festival Te Deum*, measures 1-11. London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1945.

Although composed as recently as 1972, Jubilate Deo by Walton contains a strong passage for unison men's voices, shown in Figure 16, that could have been written by Howells, demonstrating the English Signature perfectly.

FULL TENORS and BASSES UNIS.
f risoluto

O go your way _____ in - - to his

in - to his gates with ___ thanks - giv - ing,

Figure 16. Sir William Walton. Jubilate Deo, measures 51-62. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

CHAPTER 5

CHORAL MUSIC

Howells' music can be divided into two chronological periods, the first period of which embraces the years ca. 1910-1935 and is filled with chamber music, orchestral works, part-songs, and solo songs. The second period (ca. 1935-1982) contains primarily religious choral music. Figure 17 delineates the choral works by genre and period.

	<u>1910-1935</u>	<u>1935-1982</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Sacred Choral Music:			
Extended works			
Latin texts	2	2	4
English texts	1	5	6
Mixed texts	-	2	2
Canticles	9	39	48
Hymns	1	7	8
Chants	-	3	3
Anthems, Motets			
Latin texts	8	-	8
English texts	<u>6</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>30</u>
	27	82	109
Secular Choral Music:			
Extended works	2	-	2
Part-songs	<u>56</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>69</u>
	58	13	71
Totals	85	95	180

Figure 17. Table of Howells' Choral Works.

Perusal of the table reveals several pertinent facts. The Anglican canticle settings stand out as one of the largest areas of Howells' compositional endeavor. These settings will be discussed in Chapter 6. The chart also illustrates the differences between the two periods of Howells' work. The secular contribution to the body of English choral music belongs almost entirely to the first period, those years prior to the death of his son and the composition of Hymnus Paradisi. The second period contains most of the anthems, motets, and religious festival works by which Howells is better known, as well as the majority of the canticles.

From Byrd to Britten the word has stimulated and inspired English composers. Poetic ideas arising from religious and philosophical concepts and imagery have afforded continuous inspiration. In his early period, Howells found the Latin word as much an inspiration as the English vernacular. His only liturgical Latin Mass, the Mass in the Dorian Mode (subtitled "Missa Sine Nomine"), belongs to this period as do all of the Latin motets. In the earlier years Howells was "moved by the sound of Latin in an extraordinary, unaccountable way; he can compose to Latin with a freedom and warmth he hardly ever feels in English."¹ Within the context of his own development,

1. Marion Scott. "Herbert Howells." The Music Bulletin VI (May, 1924), p. 140.

however, Howells in his later period moved to English texts coming from liturgical and non-liturgical sources. The masterpiece Hymnus Paradisi is an example of a mixed Latin-English textual usage, with English far outweighing the Latin.

In the later period, two extended choral works were composed in Latin. The Missa Sabrinensis ("Severn Mass"), scored for SATB soli, chorus and orchestra, was not conceived as a liturgical work and was written specifically for the Three Choirs Festival.² The Stabat Mater was originally written for the London Bach Choir and is scored for tenor solo, chorus and orchestra. The latter work was premiered in 1965 with David Willcocks conducting. Gwilym Beechey suggested that these two works may be remembered as the peaks of Howells' achievements.³

At least two of the eight short Latin motets have a spurious history, their actual composition having been challenged by Howells himself in an interview with Hodgson

2. Missa Sabrinensis was first performed at the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester in September, 1954 with Howells conducting.

3. Gwilym Beechey. Letter to the editor, The Musical Times, 108, No. 1497 (November, 1967), p. 1115.

in 1968. Jesu Tibi Sit Gloria and Praesta, Pater, Piisimi are referred to in a 1920 commentary by Eaglefield Hull.⁴ The composer had no recollection of them. The other motets were written for Westminster Cathedral and Terry's choir there.⁵ None of these motets has been published or received performance since the 1920s. Hodgson suggested that Terry's resignation from Westminster in 1924 was in part responsible for Howells' decline in interest in Latin liturgical music.⁶

The remaining Latin composition, the Sine Nomine Phantasy, which dates from 1922, was composed for the Three Choirs Festival. Written for chorus, orchestra, and two solo voices, the work was received less than enthusiastically by an audience that was assembled to hear Mendelssohn's Elijah.

The two works written with mixed Latin-English texts are both significant and interrelated. The unaccompanied Requiem, composed in 1936 for double-chorus and SAB soli, was Howells' first working of the ideas that later would

4. A. Eaglefield Hull. "The A Cappella Choral Music of Herbert Howells." Musical Opinion (February, 1920), p. 373.

5. Sir Richard R. Terry was important in the English revival of Tudor church music, having performed numerous anthems, masses and motets of the period with his choir at Westminster Cathedral, which is Roman Catholic and not to be confused with Westminster Abbey, which is Anglican.

6. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970, p. 61.

blossom into a fuller statement of release and consolation from the loss of his son Michael. Requiem was not released for publication until 1980, when it was re-assembled from manuscript with the help of Joan Littlejohn. In 1935-36, Howells was composing a mixed Latin-English sequence entitled Hymnus Circa Exsequias Defuncti set to words by Prudentius. The composition never existed in more than rough-sketch form, but achieved fruition in Requiem and also in Hymnus Paradisi, which was finished in 1938, and became the cornerstone of the composer's second compositional period. Considered by many to be Howells' masterpiece, Hymnus Paradisi is scored in six movements for full orchestra, soli, and double-chorus. Howells described the gestation of the work in an interview with Regan:

I knew I had to get something out of me that had taken complete possession; I needed to write a special type of work. . . . It was completed in 1938 but it was a private document and I didn't want to share it with the public. It had done the service I had wanted it to, it released me from the crippling numbness of loss. In 1950, I felt able to show it to Vaughan Williams--I had known that if I showed it to anyone, it would be Ralph. He insisted that it be performed, so on the fifteenth anniversary of Michael's death [September, 1950], I conducted the first performance at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester.⁷

The sole remnants of the Prudentius poem are two lines found on page one of the score:

7. Susan Regan. "Herbert Howells and His Hymnus Paradisi." The Gramophone, 48 (March, 1971), p. 1445.

Nunc suscipe, terra, fovendum
gremioque hunc concipe molli.

(Take him, earth, for cherishing.
To thy tender breast receive thee.)

Other than the canticles, the sacred works set to English texts include five settings of the Anglican communion liturgy, three of which Howells labelled "Masses," thirty anthems, and eleven hymn tunes and chants. The three Anglican Masses include Missa Aedis Christi (1958) for Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford; An English Mass (1955); and Coventry Mass (1968) for Coventry Cathedral. They do not compare with the Latin Missa Sabrinensis in length, complexity, or scope and could be used liturgically. The two other communion services are accompanied by canticle settings. The first, in unison, was written for A. Herbert Brewer in 1924; the second service, scored for SATB chorus and organ, was an addition to the canticle settings comprising Collegium Regale (liturgical music for King's College, Cambridge) and was completed in 1956.

The thirty short sacred choral works in English are called anthems and motets; here Howells blurred the traditional separation of the two genre on the basis of Latin versus English usage. The texts come from a variety of sources ranging from the psalms to poetry by Ursula Vaughan Williams, widow of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The earliest of the English settings of non-liturgical sacred texts are in many respects the most well-known. The Three Carol-Anthems

date from 1918 and are written for four-part unaccompanied chorus. The second of this set, A Spotless Rose, uses an anonymous fourteenth-century English text, and is generally considered "a flawless achievement."⁸ As seen in Figure 18, this miniature work of beauty illustrates Howells' command of flexible rhythm and sensitive melodic line. The shifting time signatures provide long, plainsong-like phrase lengths of smoothness and flexibility. This quality lends itself well to the timelessness of the text.

8. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 74.

With easeful movement.

p

SOPRANO. A Spot-less Rose is blow - - - ing,

ALTO. A Spot-less Rose is blow - - - ing,

TENOR. A Spot-less Rose is blow - - - ing,

BASS. A Spot-less Rose is blow - - - ing,

Sprung from a ten - - - der root,

Sprung from a ten - - - der root,

Sprung from a ten - - - der root,

Sprung from a ten - - - der root,

Figure 18. Herbert Howells. *A Spotless Rose*, measures 1-4. London: Stainer and Bell, 1919.

Of particular interest in A Spotless Rose is the final cadence with its approach to the final E major chord and its cross-relation to G \sharp from subdominant A minor through a series of added-note chords creating exquisite dissonances.

The musical score shows the final cadence of 'A Spotless Rose' by Herbert Howells, measures 41-45. The score is in E major and consists of four staves: vocal line, piano accompaniment (right hand), piano accompaniment (left hand), and bass line. The lyrics are: "bare us in a cold, cold winter's night." The music features a series of added-note chords and dissonances leading to the final E major chord. Dynamics include *p*, *dim.*, *rit.*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Figure 19. Herbert Howells. A Spotless Rose, final cadence, measures 41-45. London: Stainer and Bell, 1919.

A fourth carol-anthem, Tryste Noel, for SATB chorus and piano, was commissioned for the collection Carols for Choirs 3 in 1978.⁹

Of the remaining short choral works, two require mention as highlights of their type among Howells' compositions. The 1941 masterpiece Like As the Hart Desireth the Waterbrooks, a setting of Psalm 41, verses 1-3, can be used liturgically on Holy Saturday at the blessing of the baptismal font during the Easter Vigil. Turning again to the poem of Prudentius, "Hymnus Circa Exsequias Defuncti," this time in a translation by Helen Waddell, Howells composed Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing as a commission for a combined Canadian-American memorial service held in Washington, D. C., on the first anniversary of the death of President John F. Kennedy. This work is among the finest of Howells' anthems and motets.

The secular choral music of Herbert Howells consists of two extended works and sixty-nine choral part-songs written for diverse voice groupings. The majority of the part-songs, fifty-six, appeared in Howells' first period. Dating from 1918, Sir Patrick Spens for SATB chorus, baritone solo, and orchestra is a departure for Howells into the world of the dramatic. The secular cantata A Kent Yeoman's Wooing Song is scored for soprano and baritone soli, chorus

9. John Rutter and David Willcocks, eds. Carols for Choirs 3. London: Oxford University Press, 1978.

and orchestra, and was written in 1933, but not performed until 1953.

Inheritance, for unaccompanied SSAATTBB chorus, was one of ten part-songs set by various composers to texts by Walter de la Mare comprising A Garland for the Queen. This collection was commissioned by the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1953 to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Howells returned to an elegiac strain in the part-song The Summer Is Coming, composed in 1965 and dedicated to the memory of Arnold Bax. These songs are among the finest of the genre in Howells' catalog and are secular rarities in his later period of composition.

CHAPTER 6

CANTICLE SETTINGS OF HERBERT HOWELLS

An understanding of the Anglican canticles of Herbert Howells would best be served by first examining the liturgical setting of the canticles in the church.

The first Book of Common Prayer appearing in 1549 contained Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's reform of the Daily Offices in the Morning and Evening Prayer liturgies, sometimes referred to as Matins and Evensong. Morning Prayer drew upon the ancient Offices of Matins, Lauds, and Prime as its sources, and Evening Prayer combines Vespers and Compline. The canticles are those hymns and psalms appointed for usage during these daily Offices.

A table of the canticles follows, with the number of settings of each by Howells in parentheses.

 Anglican Canticles

<u>Canticle</u>	<u>Text Source</u>	<u>Usage</u>	<u>(No.)</u>
Venite, Exultemus Domino	Psalm 95	Morning Prayer	(-)
Te Deum Laudamus	Niceta of Remesiana	Morning Prayer	(6)
Benedictus es, Domine	Apocrypha	Morning Prayer (alternative to Te Deum)	(1)
Benedicite	Apocrypha	Morning Prayer (alternative to Te Deum)	(-)
Benedictus	Luke I:68-69	Morning Prayer	(3)
Jubilate Deo	Psalm 100	Morning Prayer (alternative to Benedictus)	(3)
Magnificat	Luke I:46-55	Evening Prayer	(17)
Cantate Domino	Psalm 98	Evening Prayer (alternative to Magnificat)	(-)
Bonum Est Confiteri	Psalm 92	Evening Prayer (alternative to Magnificat)	(-)
Nunc Dimittis	Luke II:29-32	Evening Prayer	(18)
Deus Misereatur	Psalm 67	Evening Prayer (alternative to Nunc Dimittis)	(-)
Benedic, Anima Mea	Psalm 105	Evening Prayer (alternative to Nunc Dimittis)	(-)

Figure 20. The Anglican Canticles.

The Magnificat appears in Luke I:46-55. The Evangelist attributes the Song of our Lord's mother to the occasion of her visit to the mother of John the Baptist. It has been used as a canticle in the Offices since at least the fourth century, perhaps earlier. In his combination of Vespers and Compline, Archbishop Cranmer placed the Magnificat in a position where it links the Old Testament Lesson with the New Testament Lesson.

Textually, Shepherd calls the Magnificat "the loveliest flower of Hebrew Messianic poetry."¹ It could have been written only by one intimate with the scriptures and in perfect harmony with its piety and aspirations.

Musically, the Magnificat has a long and varied history. The earliest example of a polyphonic Magnificat dates from an anonymous fourteenth century fragment. Apart from the Ordinary of the Mass, the Magnificat was the liturgical text most often set polyphonically. Among composers of the late sixteenth century, Victoria (18 settings--one-tenth of the surviving output of 180 works), Morales (20), Palestrina (30), and Lassus (100) wrote large numbers of settings. Later periods witnessed the development of large-scale works for great numbers of forces such as the Magnificat at the close of Monteverdi's Vespro

1. Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr. The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1950, p. 26.

della Beata Vergine (1610), the polychoral Deutsches Magnificat by Schütz, and later, the J. S. Bach Magnificat complete with Christmas Chorale interpolations. Vivaldi, Pergolesi, and C. P. E. Bach all wrote larger-scale Magnificats, and Mozart closed his Vesperae Solennes de Confessore with a Magnificat wherein text is subservient to sonata form. In the twentieth century, Penderecki composed a notable large-scale work, but in England, Howells composed seventeen settings of the canticle, thereby leading to a revitalization of the Magnificat as used in the Anglican liturgy.

The Nunc Dimittis, from Luke II:29-32, is the response of the gentle Simeon, an elder in the temple of Jerusalem, as he sees the child Jesus after having been promised that he should behold the salvation of Israel before his death. Its usage for Evening Offices of the church also dates from the fourth century. As the Magnificat looks forward to the Incarnation, the Nunc Dimittis looks back upon it as fact. Thus, in Evening Prayer it appropriately follows the New Testament Lesson, as the Magnificat appropriately precedes it. The Nunc Dimittis was set in polyphony very rarely, but one by Costanzo Festa is extant. A paired Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Thomas Tallis anticipates the later Anglican practice of setting them together with a unifying Gloria Patri common to both, similar to the practice of Howells. Given Howells' intense

motivation by the music of the Tudor composers, this surely is no coincidence.

The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis texts originally expressed intense personal emotions of individuals, therefore, the composer is challenged to retain this essential character of the texts using large forces in even larger acoustics.

"The only thing for a composer to do is to write honestly, to write what he wants to write."² This Howells did with a truth and beauty that did him great honor. With such a busy schedule as educator and adjudicator, he composed only what he wanted to, when he wanted to, always with a specific motivation such as people or places. Hodgson describes Howells as "a nature poet gone to church . . . indebted to the dual influences of nature and religion,"³ while receiving from Stanford and Parry the "one abiding and unbroken tradition in English music."⁴ Although over fifty when he composed the first in a long succession of canticle settings dedicated to a specific building, those for King's College, Cambridge, Howells made a large and

2. Herbert Howells, in an interview with Susan Regan. "Herbert Howells and His Hymnus Paradisi." The Gramophone, 48 (March, 1971), p. 1446.

3. Peter John Hodgson. The Music of Herbert Howells. Doctoral Dissertation, the University of Colorado, 1970, p. 210.

4. Ibid, p. 211.

effective contribution to the body of English religious choral music, achieving new perspectives on the Anglican musical liturgy while doing so. The majority of the canticles are associated with a specific establishment rather than by key or other description.

Howells' love for tradition, his awareness of liturgical history, architectural structure, acoustical peculiarities, and the personnel associated with a particular building all motivated the composition of the canticles. The heightened spirituality he felt after the death of his son and the trauma of yet another world war provided great impetus as well.

In all my music for the Church, people and places have been a dual influence. The cathedral in Gloucester, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey in London, St. John's and King's College Chapels in Cambridge, Christ Church and New College in Oxford--these and their recent directors of music have been a paramount shaping force. Men, choirs, ecclesiastical buildings have become inseparably a part of that force. So too have exemplars and--
acoustics.⁵

Howells never pursued a career of daily professional duties in any particular church, or with any chapel or college choir, apart from a small number of short, temporary positions. The composer's acoustical awareness began early

5. Herbert Howells. Liner Notes for the recording Church Music of Herbert Howells. Argo ZRG 507, 1967.

in his life and career at Gloucester Cathedral. "I suppose it's a throwback to my early days as a chorister and incompetent organist. I was brought up in Gloucester and my earliest experiences are all bound up with that cathedral."⁶

Howells' canticles, technically difficult, are capable of performance by only the best choirs. He regretted that by their very nature the canticles were beyond the choirs of parishes and villages.⁷

Howells' settings of the canticles for Morning Prayer include those written in 1924 for A. Herbert Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral. Twenty years passed before the Te Deum and Jubilate for King's College, Cambridge, were composed. Afterwards, four Te Deums, two settings of Benedictus, one Jubilate Deo, and one Benedictus es, Domine were made. The latter is dedicated to Alec Wyton at Saint John the Divine Cathedral in New York.

The largest group of Howells' canticles belongs to the Evening Prayer liturgy. Howells' first period contains

6. Herbert Howells, in an interview with Susan Regan. "Herbert Howells and His Hymnus Paradisi." The Gramophone, 48 (March, 1971), p. 1445.

7. Nicholas Webber. "Herbert Howells at 85." Music and Musicians, 26 (October, 1977), p. 26.

the only setting in Latin, that of a Nunc Dimittis and Gloria in 1914, and witnessed the appearance of the first three settings of Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis together.⁸ This includes the one in unison for A. Herbert Brewer at Gloucester, and one written in 1935 for four-part male chorus, the only settings for their particular voice combinations. All of the remaining canticles for Evening Prayer belong to the later period of Howells' composition. Notably, none of the alternate Evening canticles received a musical setting by Howells.

Some unifying threads run through the series of canticles. Figure 21 shows the opening melodic statement of five different Magnificats, all with emphasis on the minor third, serving either to establish minor tonality or as part of the English Signature.

8. Together the two canticles form a "service," hence the designations "St. Paul's Service," "Gloucester Service," etc.

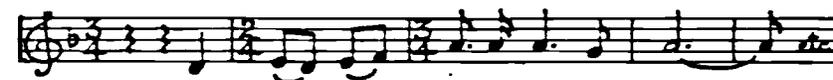
Collegium Regale*Worcester**St. Paul's**Collegium Sancti Johanni**Westminster*

Figure 21. Opening phrase of five Magnificats demonstrating usage of minor thirds as a unifying element.

The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis are both invariably approached in a manner of restraint to characterize the gentleness of Mary and Simeon. However, the Gloria Patri always feels strong and triumphant. This suggests a singleness of devotional purpose appropriate for liturgical use.

CHAPTER 7

MAGNIFICAT AND NUNC DIMITTIS FOR SAINT PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Howells composed the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral, together known as Saint Paul's Service, in October of 1951. It is scored for SATB chorus and organ. The motivational forces behind these canticle settings are best described by the composer himself:

Of the series of canticle-settings offered to people and places this is the most extended in scale. With the great spaces of St. Paul's in mind, as well as the acoustical problems Dr. John Dykes-Bower had experienced during our training in Gloucester Cathedral, the nature of this setting would be acutely influenced. Prolonged "echo," notable in St. Paul's, would dictate a less rapidly-changing harmonic rhythm [for Howells] than would be feasible in many less-reverberant buildings. So it is that in this setting harmonic and tonality change are deployed in more leisured, more spacious ways. Climaxes are built more slowly. But with these conditions there goes a heightened volume of sound, and a tonal opulence commensurate with a vast church.¹

Text dictated formal structure in all of Howells' liturgical music. In the Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, Howells composed ten musical sections corresponding to ten phrases of the text, ranging in length from six measures to the nineteen-measure initial thematic statement. Organ

1. Herbert Howells. Linar notes for the recording Church Music of Herbert Howells. Argo ZRG 507, 1967.

transitional bridges connect one section with another and establish new key centers, usually with a tonic chord on a downbeat.

The five sections comprising the first half of the work present the opening theme and four succeeding variations, written primarily in minor keys. The second half of the work also contains five sections, all of which present new melodic material, mostly in major keys. As shown in Figure 22, the organ asserts its important role by making the first sound, establishing the initial key of G minor. The choir follows with the theme, stated in unison.

MAGNIFICAT

Poco allegro, sempre con moto

The musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the vocal parts: SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR, and BASS. Each vocal staff begins with a *mf* dynamic marking. The lyrics for all parts are "My soul doth magnify the Lord:". The organ part is on the bottom staff, starting with a *mf* dynamic marking and a tempo marking of *Poco allegro, sempre con moto* with a metronome marking of ♩ = 72. A "Ped." marking is present at the beginning of the organ part.

Figure 22. Herbert Howells. *Magnificat* for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 1-4. London: Novello, 1954.

The first of the organ transitions, shown in Figure 23, occurs at measures 19-20 in a modulation from D minor back to the original G minor. The thematic statement in measures 20-28 consists of minor thirds, perfect fourths, and step-wise motion, the lone major third in measure 27 preventing the melody from being a perfect example of the English Signature. This section typifies the changing meters dictated by text and phrase shape which occur in several places in the work, recalling the florid phrases of A Spotless Rose but in an entirely different character and context.

For be hold, from hence - forth all ge - ne -

For be - hold, from hence - forth all ge - ne -

For be - hold, from hence - forth all ge - ne -

For be - hold, from hence - forth all ge - ne -

mf

Ped.

ra - tions shall call me bless - ed. For he that is

ra - tions shall call me bless - ed. For he that is

ra - tions shall call me bless - ed. For he that is

ra - tions shall call me bless - ed. For he that is

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

Figure 23. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 19-28. London: Novello, 1954.

Figure 24 shows measures 35-44, unique in the work for several reasons. Howells reversed his usual procedure in measure 35 as the choir sings alone on the downbeat, its G major chord establishing that key, and the organ follows, though still serving as a bridge between phrases of the text. The thematic statement, made first by the organ and then the tenor voice part, becomes a Lydian mode melody-- identified by the major third (G to B) and the tritone relationship (G to C[#]). The Lydian modality remains constant throughout this section of the work in spite of changing supporting harmonies suggesting the keys of G major in measures 35-39, C[#] minor in measure 39, and B minor in measures 40-41.

a tempo

Name. _____

Name. _____

Name. _____

mp And his mer-cy is on them — that fear him: — through-out —

Name. _____

a tempo

pp Ch. (to Sw.)

f He hath shew -

f He hath shew -

all ge-ne-ra-tions. — f He hath shew -

f He hath shew -

add to Sw. f

Figure 24. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 35-44. London: Novello, 1954.

As depicted in Figure 25, perhaps the most tender moment in the Magnificat occurs as a three-measure organ bridge culminates in a B major-minor seventh chord in second inversion at measure 83. The text which follows appropriately reads "He remembering His mercy."

This section typifies those found in the second half of the Magnificat in the use of fresh melodic material and major tonality--G[#] major in measure 85, F major in measure 87, and D major in measure 89. This section of the work also demonstrates the skill at contrapuntal texture which pervades Howells' compositional style. As shown in Figure 26, minor tonality returns as the polyphony ends in measure 91, the keys being F minor, and in measure 93, A minor.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes vocal staves for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'rall.' and 'più tranquillo'. The lyrics are: 'He re - mem - bring his'. The second system continues the vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'mer - cy - hath hol - pen'. The piano accompaniment includes markings for 'Man.' and 'Ped.'.

Figure 25. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 80-90. London: Novello, 1954.

The image shows a musical score for a choir and piano. It consists of five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), and the bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "hol - pen - his ser - vant Is - ra - el:". The score includes dynamic markings such as "poco cresc." and "mf". The key signature is G minor (one flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties.

Figure 26. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 91-94. London: Novello, 1954.

Appearing as an example of the English Signature, the original theme returns in the original key of G minor to serve as a link between the Gloria Patri and the preceding canticle, as shown in Figure 27. The theme interplays between organ and choir in antiphonal fashion.

ancora poco meno mosso

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso

fgt

and — to — the Son: — and to —

and — to — the Son: — and to —

and — to — the Son: — and to —

and — to — the Son: — and to —

Figure 27. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 107-116. London: Novello, 1954.

As depicted in Figure 28, the character of the Gloria Patri changes at measure 119. The choir sings a D major chord on the downbeat, ending the syllabic homophonic texture of the opening. As in the Magnificat, Howells reserved major keys for the imitative sections, with no trace of the original theme present. The melismatic setting of the word "ever" at a forte dynamic level in measures 124-127 together with the sweeping rise of soprano tessitura suggest the tonal opulence Howells deliberately sought with the acoustics of Saint Paul's Cathedral in mind.

con moto
piu f
 Ghost; As it was in the be-gin - ning, is now, and ev -

piu f
 Ghost; As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev -

con moto
piu f
 Ghost; As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev -

Ghost; As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev -

con moto
piu f

er, - ev - er

con moto

Figure 28. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 119-127. London: Novello, 1954.

The Gloria Patri concludes with a shift from an F minor chord to a G major chord; a Phrygian cadence, recalling that used by Vaughan Williams years earlier in the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis.

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are arranged in four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics 'A - men.' are written below each vocal staff. The piano accompaniment is shown in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. A dynamic marking 'ff' (fortissimo) is placed above the piano part. The score illustrates a Phrygian cadence, characterized by a half-step movement from the second degree to the first degree of the scale.

Figure 29. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 144-146. London: Novello, 1954.

Introspective and luminous in its "other-worldly" beauty, the Nunc Dimittis has a different character from that of the Magnificat. As demonstrated in Figure 30, the imitative section, marked dolce, has tenderness and delicacy created by suspensions, anticipations, and gentle added-note dissonances which resolve one into another. This interweaving of voice parts and organ helps characterize the

The climax of this short canticle occurs appropriately at the words "Glory of Thy People Israel," the only place in the entire Saint Paul's Service marked fortissimo. The linear sweep of the vocal parts and the leisurely pace of the tempo again suggest the spaciousness of Saint Paul's acoustical properties.

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are arranged in four staves, each with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics 'glo ry of thy' are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment is on a grand staff with a bass clef on the left and a treble clef on the right. The score is marked with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and features a linear sweep of notes across the vocal parts and a leisurely pace in the piano accompaniment.

Figure 31. Herbert Howells. Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 44-47. London: Novello, 1954.

Since the Gloria Patri follows both the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in the Anglican Evening Prayer liturgy, English church music composers unified their musical services by using a setting of that doxological prayer common to both canticles. A lesser composer might have

used identical musical material, however Howells' creative genius allowed him to subtly vary the Gloria Patri following the Nunc Dimittis from that of the Magnificat in the first fourteen measures.

Beginning at measure 54 of the Nunc Dimittis (see Figure 32), the original theme still serves as the overall unifying element, used antiphonally between choir and organ as before but harmonized this time in the choral parts. The organ establishes the key of C minor in measure 54 and A^b minor in measure 60, compared with G minor in the Magnificat (Figure 33). Howells altered the rhythm to fit a scheme of changing meters different but equally effective in setting the same phrases of the text, highlighted by the shift from $\frac{2}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{2}$ in measures 56-57 of the Nunc Dimittis (Figure 32) compared with $\frac{3}{2}$ to $\frac{5}{4}$ in measures 112-113 of the Magnificat (Figure 33).

poco più mosso

f >

Glo - ry be - to the Fa - ther,

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther,

poco più mosso

f >

Glo - ry be - to the Fa - ther,

f >

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther,

poco più mosso

f marc.

and to the Son:

and to the Son:

and to the Son:

and to the Son:

poco

Figure 32. Herbert Howells. *Nunc Dimittis* for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 54-62. London: Novello, 1954.

ancora poco meno mosso

f

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

f

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso

f

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

f

Glo - ry be to the Fa-ther, —

ancora poco meno mosso

f

and — to — the Son: —

Figure 33. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 107-115. London: Novello, 1954.

As shown in Figure 34, the harmonized stretto entrances of the choir suggest the Lydian mode, providing an interesting "dual modality" which pervades measures 64-67 of the Nunc Dimittis. The Lydian choral parts are supported by Phrygian relationships in the organ--the A^b minor harmony (written enharmonically as G[#] minor in measure 63) is interrupted in measure 64 by an A major-minor seventh chord in first inversion followed by immediate return to A^b minor, a Phrygian half-step. The sudden unison D of the choir in measure 67, a tritone away from the previous A^b, suggests the Lydian mode while dramatically painting the word "Ghost." The comparable passage from the Magnificat, shown in Figure 35, remains in G minor until the D major chord in measure 119, the homophonic texture emphasized by the unison choral parts in measures 117-118. The final twenty-six measures of the Nunc Dimittis are identical with those of the Magnificat.

The image shows a musical score for a Magnificat. It consists of five staves. The top four staves are vocal parts, and the bottom staff is piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "and to the Ho - ly Ghost; As it was in the be." The score includes performance markings such as "con moto" and "più f".

Figure 35. Herbert Howells. Magnificat for Saint Paul's Cathedral, measures 116-120. London: Novello, 1954.

In summary, the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral, while unified in many respects, also stand alone as complete and separate musical statements, befitting their usage at different places within the Evening Prayer liturgy. Together they are a miniature compendium of the stylistic traits of Howells the choral composer. Living in an age when leading composers wrote more for the concert hall and opera house than for the church, Howells enriched

the liturgical repertoire to a great degree. Benoliel stated:

He was the finest British composer of his generation and one of the finest of his time from any country. The core of his output, the large-scale works for chorus and orchestra--Sine Nomine [Phantasy] (1922), Hymnus Paradisi (1938), Missa Sabrinensis (1954), and Stabat Mater (1963)--are masterpieces of twentieth-century music.²

Howells' music arouses feelings of passionate longing and evokes images of light. The latter, a unique aspect of his creative genius, becomes apparent in the climax of the Nunc Dimittis for Saint Paul's Cathedral, incandescent in its fortissimo linear sweep. A man of enormous integrity, neither weak nor humble, and not pushy, egocentric, or fashionable, Howells composed within conventional traditions at a time when disregard for rules prevailed upon so many other composers. He captured the English ambience while reviving and reinforcing appreciation of traditions that remain impervious to time and change. His music suggests grief, but a grief that is transient, and hopes of humankind that are indestructible. Howells is a composer "who really matters, because the only people who really do matter are those who make our lives more beautiful."³

2. Bernard Benoliel. "Herbert Howells (1892-1983)." Tempo, 145 (June, 1983), p. 11.

3. Christopher Palmer. Herbert Howells--A Study. Kent: Novello, 1978, p. 28.

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